

# USING ICT INSTRUCTIONAL PACKAGES TO DETERMINE THE REQUIRED COMPETENCIES FOR COUNSELLOR TRAINEES IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS.

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## Abstract

*The main purpose of this study is to determine the required ICT Competencies for counselor trainees. Two research questions guided the study. The population for the study was all the 64 students guidance counselors from both the departments of guidance and counseling Nnamdi Azikwe University Awka and those from the department of psychology Nawfor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe. This study will determine whether the ICT Knowledge and skills that the trainee guidance counselors learnt in their colleges are adequate in preparing them to be successful in their work place. There was no sampling since the population size was small. Mean score was used to answer the research questions, findings indicate that there are five main ICT skills that a counselor trainee needs to gain, for competency in counseling. The five ICT skills are: Information searching skills, interpreting data from computerized psychological testing programmed skills, quality report writing skills, public speaking skills and electronic data base management skills. Findings of this study are hoped to assist counselor trainers at higher institutions to improve in colour. The trainee counselor will acquire knowledge on how to access live contents over the internet their counseling programme in preparing highly-trained counselor for future roles in the school system.*

## Introduction

The emergence of ICT has transformed our society to an information society. United Nations educational scientific and cultural organization (UNESCO 2002) defined information and communication technology as the combination of information technology with other related technologies, specifically communication technologies.

The emergence of ICT has transformed education in Nigeria and made it more interactive. It has empowered teachers and students practically and theoretically in the use of technological facilities ICT has helped teachers and students to keep up-to ódate academic communication in Nigeria for its efficiency in working place.

Duru (2010) observed that progress is made in learning when ICTs are rightly integrated into teaching and learning process. Iloeje (2002) in Okon Enoh (2009) contended that the interactivity in education and learning techniques brought about by the new technology has created a whole new learning environment and transformed the relationship among teachers and the learners.

This restructuring process requires effective integration of technologies into existing context in order to provide learners with knowledge of specific subject areas to promote meaningful learning and to enhance productions (Tomei, 2005).

A trainee counselor needs to be versed in computer expert counseling so to be exposed to many behavioral skills which will help him/her aptly provide counseling services for youths and adults with inappropriate behaviors.

The acquisition of ICT instructional packages will help a trainee counselor develop greatly his hidden creativity competences and skills.

### **Rationale for Acquisition of ICT Instructional Packages by a Trainee Counselor**

On line help, the trainee counselor will be competent in rendering services to his client on live counseling chat sessions, e-mail counseling video conferencing group chat room counseling computer assisted psycho-social therapy programme psycho-educational and information websites self-help quizzes, discussion or support groups online psychological assessment and testing, self help materials for purchase over the internet, universal cyber space relationship. A trainee counselor should be knowledgeable in cyber space relationship because there to be client will expect their counselor to be aware and understand internet relationships and outline behavior.

Audio-visual Aids these help in providing occupation/career/ vocational information to clients, when counselors program them well, it helps to bring the world of work into the classroom. A trainee counselor should acquire knowledge on how to use ICT instructional packages in other to generate vocational thoughts, reasoning, discussions, debates and interests impression on the picture of workers at various jobs. With the acquisition of ICT packages the trainee counselor will have knowledge on his clients internet use so that they could provide data to assess their functioning level.

Global and expertise counseling - with the acquisition of ICT instructional packages the trainee counselor will acquire knowledge on how to access live contents over the internet in colour. This is developed from audio video software, their clients can consult them from any part of the world by sitting in their bedrooms and parlors, and browsing through the internet. The internet is a worldwide (global) network of computer, millions of which are found in each country linking all the countries of the world together consequently counselors and clients, other professionals share information like data, programmes, packages, pictures that relate to counseling.

The large research movement studying the impact of technology in counseling was only evident in 1990s. Edwards, Portman and Bethea (2002). most of the researches related to the use of technology in counseling can be categories into three main areas record keeping, data analysis, cyber counseling and cyber learning and recently in counselor training programme.

### **Background of Study**

The study was carried out at both the Nnandi Azikiwe University and Nwafor Orizu College of Education Nsugbe. A total of 64 guidance counseling students were used for the study. The students are currently under practical training. The counseling program offered by Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka and Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe were carefully planned and designed to prepare professional counselors in various organizations in the government and corporate sector. The training programme combines theoretical and practical approach to counseling. Computer application for counselors had been added as part of the

programme requirement in those two colleges sampled as part of the curriculum for trainee counselor. The course was designed to introduce the counselor students about basic computer applications software such as word processor, electronic spread sheet, electronic database and presentation software.

This study was carried out to identify to what extent that the knowledge and skills that the students, who were undertaking their practicum training, learnt in the institutions are adequate in preparing them to be successful in their workplaces however, this paper will only focus on the information and communication technology (ICT) Competencies of the students/trainees at their workplace. The philosophical framework of this research will be based on the standards of counselor technical competencies developed by the association for counselor education and supervision (ACES) Technology interest Group network (1999).

Findings of this study are essential in assisting the education of the counseling programme at the two institutions used to upgrade their program.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions used for this study are:

1. To what extent do the students perceived that ICT knowledge and skills assist them in performing their tasks as counselors?
2. What is the main ICT incompetence that the Bachelor of education psychology and counseling students portrayed during their practicum training?

### **Methodology**

The design of the study was a survey the study was designed to elicit information from trainees guidance counselors on the extent the students perceived that the ICT knowledge and skills assist them in performing their tasks as counselors. Also, to what extent ICT incompetence hinder them from performing their task as counselors. 64 trainee counselors from both institutions were used for the study. Since the population was small, census sampling was used so as to avoid sampling error.

The questionnaire was structured on a four point rating scale of strongly agree (SA) agree (a) Disagree (D), and strongly Disagree face and content validity was used to validate the instrument Draft of the instrument was given to three experts in the department of guidance and counseling at Nnamdi Azikiwe university in Awka based on the contributions and suggestions of the experts, some items were modified and in some cases new ones were incorporated. To test for reliability, the parsons produced moment correlation coefficient was used. Pilot study was carried out in Nwafor Orizu College of education, Nsugbe using spilt half methods. The mean rating were coded and subjected to statistical analysis and subjected test yielded a coefficient alpha value of 0.87 which was considered high enough for the study. The researchers personally administered the instrument on the respondents. The researchers waited and collected he completed copies of the questionnaire. All the 64 copies distributed were retrieved mean scores were used to answer the research questions. Values were assigned to the opinions of the respondents as follows.

Strongly Agree: 4

Agree: 3

Disagree: 2

Strongly Disagree: 1

Any mean score of 2.5 and above was accepted while any mean below 2.5 was rejected.

**Results:**

**Table 1 : Mean score on extent the students perceived that the ICT knowledge and skills assist them in performing their tasks as a counselor.**

S/No	Item	Guidance counselor trainees	Decision
1	ICT skills acquired during training are beneficial in performing daily task	2.6	Accepted
2	ICT training has helped to improve the trainees record keeping skills	2.5	Accepted
3	ICT training has helped to improve the trainees system of data analyses	3.5	Accepted
4	ICT training has helped to improve the trainees cyber counseling and cyber learning	3.6	Accepted
	Section mean	3.1	Accepted

In table one above, the mean scores for items 1-4, exceeded 2.5 for trainee guidance counselors. This shows that the ICT knowledge and skills assist the trainee guidance counselors adequately well in performing their tasks as counselors. The section mean of 3.1 shows the general acceptance that trainee counselors mastery of ICT skills help them in performing their tasks well Nwosu (2009).

**Table 2: mean score on the main ICT incompetence that the Bachelor of education psychology and counseling students portrayed during their practicum training.**

S/No	Item	Guidance counselor trainees	Decision
5	Inability to utilize word processing software to produce quality counseling related reports	2.8	Accepted
6	Inability to interpret data from a computerized psychological testing programme	2.6	Accepted
7	Lack information searching skills	3.5	Accepted
8	Inability to assess and use counseling related electronic data base	2.5	Accepted

9	Lack of public speaking skills	2.7	Accepted
	Section mean	2.8	Accepted

In table two above, the mean scores for items 5-9 and also the section mean exceeded 2.5 this showed the main in competencies the Bachelor of Education psychology and counseling students portrayed during their training.

### **Discussion of findings**

Findings of the study are presented below based on the two research questions, the students' perceptions of the importance of the ICT knowledge and skills to assist them as a certified counselor, and the main ICT incompetence that the Bachelor of Education psychology and counseling students portrayed during their practicum training

The researchers discovered that the counselor trainees all agreed that the ICT knowledge and skills they acquired during their training in the institution were very useful and beneficial to them in their daily tasks as counselors.

Also the counselor trainees agreed that the ICT training they acquired help them to improve their record keeping and their system of data analysis and also improve their cyber counseling and cyber learning.

On the issue of ICT in competencies that the Bachelor of Education psychology and counseling students portrayed during their practicum training, the researchers discovered inability to utilize word processing software to produce quality counseling related reports.

Others include inability to interpret data from a computerized psychological testing programme, lack of information skills, inability to assess and use counseling related electronic data base and lack of public data base.

### **Conclusion**

As the advancement of technology continues rapidly, it should be realized that technology has somehow impacted on our working environment in a variety of ways as for counselors, technology competency is among the ten core competencies of a competent counselor outlined by the International Association for Education and Vocational Guidance (2003). As a result, counselor training programmers at any institution of higher learning increasingly required to adapt to these changes reactively.

Results of this study indicate that counseling training programme need to incorporate a well planned. Structured technology courses related to counseling. The courses should be able to address certain standards of technology competencies developed by appropriate counseling organizations.

Counselor training programmed at higher institution need to address the five technology incompetence's which are information searching skills, data interpreting skills, report writing skills, public speaking skills and electronic data base management skills. The counselor trainers also need to boost their technology skills and reconsider the revision of their counseling curriculum and modify their instructional approaches to ensure that high quality graduates are produced.

### Recommendations

Findings of this study implore the need to review the current curriculum of the undergraduate counseling programme in our universities and colleges of education to make it more functional and realistic to our needs and aspirations. The focus of this review is to find suitable approaches to increase technology competencies among counselor students. The existing curriculum of the introductory computer application course of the programme needs modification. It is suggested that the curriculum of the course needs to consider the twelve recommended guidelines outlined by the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES) Technology Internet Network Group (1999). The content of the course needs to concentrate on introducing the computer application software that is really related to the counseling profession. Integration of technology-associated courses with counseling courses should be taken into account.

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